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ABSTRACT

A content analysis was conducted of 203 editorials from the "Daily Oklahoman" from the first six months of the 1980 presidential campaign. The analysis was based on two assumptions: (1) the tone of the 1980 presidential campaign essentially was set after only six months of official campaigning, and (2) the "Daily Oklahoman" editorial page, which often relies on nationally syndicated conservative columnists, reflected the conservative trend that ultimately shaped the election. The analysis indicated that the total number of editorials concerning the three Democratic candidates (93) clearly surpassed the attention granted the eight Republication candidates (79). President Carter received almost half the Democratic editorials, and approximately one third of those were unfavorable. Edward Kennedy received the remaining Democratic editorials and nearly half of those were critical of him. No editorials examined the candidacy of Jerry Brown. Of the Republican editorials, John Anderson's 10 were mostly unfavorable, and George Bush's, for the most part, dealt with factual information, most often in a favorable tone. John Connally, Philip Crane, and Robert Dole received little or no editorial coverage. Ronald Reagan received a considerable amount of editorial analysis throughout the campaign, a total of 35 editorials, almost all favorable. The study concluded that editorial policy was clearly in favor of conservative candidates, often at the expense of moderates and liberals. (A response to the study by a communications faculty member examining problems in the assumptions and in the methodology is included). (HTH)

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THE DAILY OKLAHOMAN AND PERSUASION IN THE EARLY 1980 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

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This investigation takes the form of a "case study" assessing the persuasive editorial trends of one isolated medium, the Daily Oklahoman, relative to the first six months of the 1980 presidential campaign. Some 203 editorials were analyzed and categorized from October 20, 1979, to April 20, 1980.

This paper explored the suppositions that (1) the tone of the 1980 presidential campaign essentially was set after only six months of official campaigning and (2) the Daily Oklahoman's editorial page--which often relies on nationally syndicated conservative columnists, such as Patrick Buchanan, William Buckley, and James Kilpatrick--was reflective of the conservative trend which ultimately shaped this election.

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I.

When the presidential campaign officially opened in mid-October of 1979, few political analysts could have anticipated the world events that were to unfold. On November 4th, 1979, exactly one year before the actual election, the U.S. Embassy in Tehran was seized by Iranian militants who held some 52 American hostages beyond the duration of the campaign. To further complicate matters, on Christmas day, Russian troops invaded Afghanistan, attempting to establish a new military satelite.

The early presidential campaign was re-shaped by these international events, and the electorate's attention was clearly diverted from the campaign to these most sensitive global situations. When the front runners--Kennedy, Reagan, and Carter--officially announced their candidacy on November 7th, November 13th, and December 4th, respectively, the Iran crisis was capturing all the headlines. Carter, in fact, initially refused to campaign at all until the safe return of the American hostages. The situation in Afghanistan also stole a considerable amount of thunder from the campaign. This was particularly evident in the month following the invasion. Journalistic focus on the campaign seemed to decline during this period--at least in the Daily Oklahoman (see Table 1, time frame #3).

Another ramification of these international crises was the amazing political resurrection of President Carter. From mid-October to mid-January, Carter managed to reverse his 2-to-1 underdog status when pitted against Kennedy for the Democratic nomination. Although Carter's popularity began to decline in late February, his early primary victories demonstrated his ample use of the "American tendency to rally behind their President in times of international crises" (Schieffer, 1980).

The Republican side of the presidential campaign was seemingly less affected by the developments in Iran and Afghanistan. Among the large field of Republican presidential candidates, Ronald Reagan successfully held off all contenders. There were some interesting challenges by John Anderson, George Bush, and a near-challenge by Gearld Ford, but Reagan headed for the Republican National Convention as the clear front runner.

The purpose of this study was to examine the persuasive complexities of the first six months of the 1980 presidential campaign by an analysis of one isolated persuasive medium. Hence, the editorial page

of the Daily Oklahoman was content-analyzed from October 20, 1979, to April 19, 1980, for campaign-relevant commentaries. As illustrated in Table 1, these data were divided into six one-month time frames. Additionally, campaign editorials were separated into four categories: (1) general editorials--dealing with a combination of candidates or the campaign in general, (2) major Democratic candidates--Brown, Carter, and Kennedy, (3) major Republican candidates--Anderson, Baker, Bush, Connally, Crane, Dolé, Ford, and Reagan, and (4) other candidates. This analysis thus focused on data from the first six months of official presidential campaigning. Since this tabulation was completed before John Anderson declared his Independent candidacy in late April, he was considered as a Republican candidate in the data. The ultimate goal of this investigation was to see what persuasive trends emerged in the Daily Oklahoman's editorial page relative to the early 1980 presidential campaign. Moreover, we contend that these early months set the tone for the ensuing campaign and presidential showdown in November.

The Concept of Persuasion

Nilsen (1974) pointed out that as "efforts to influence our fellow human beings become more deliberate and directed toward specific ends--and the more so if the ends are public--we term the effort persuasion" (p. 60). Also inherent in Nilsen's explanation is that those to be influenced have a choice and this process of choosing is vital to a democratic society. The act of campaigning for a political office is an excellent example of attempts to influence that prompt "choice" on the part of the electorate. It is our contention that newspaper editorial commentaries can have a noteworthy impact on the electorate's "choice."

In terms of relying on newspaper articles and editorials as campaign barometers, Prisuta (1973) found that voters made significant use of newspapers as a source of political information. Prisuta offered evidence that although television may reach more people, newspapers appeared to have more impact on the electorate (p. 169). Noting, in particular, the research of Gregg (1965), McCombs (1967), and Robinson (1974), Kraus and Davis (1978) concluded that newspaper editorials have effects on opinions and apparently alter and shape political reality (pp. 223-225). Based upon the preceding research, we undertook a content analysis of Daily Oklahoman campaign-relevant editorials.

The Editorial Page in the Daily Oklahoman as a Persuasive Force

We realize that the data analyzed in this study were clearly affected by the editorial biases of one isolated publication--the Daily Oklahoman. However, with a daily circulation of approximately 300,000, the Daily Oklahoman provided campaign information for a significant number of people. Also, its editorial page which often relied on nationally syndicated conservative columnists (e.g., Patrick Buchanan, William Buckley, and James Kilpatrick) appeared reflective of the conservative trend which ultimately shaped the 1980 election. While the Daily Oklahoman may be limited as a barometer for national thinking, it was at least a significant regional measure, and certainly an example of the opinion shaping undertaken in a major state newspaper. The Daily Oklahoman's editorial page was generally made up of two or three commentaries by the editorial staff, three or four commentaries by nationally syndicated columnists, and one editorial cartoon.

Columnists who wrote commentaries relevant to the campaign were

the following: (1) Patrick J. Buchanan, a former Nixon speech writer, and very conservative; (2) William F. Buckley, Jr., perhaps America's foremost advocate of conservatism; (3) Alan Cromley, whose views appeared to be fairly conservative; (4) Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, who provided a more moderate perspective than most of the other columnists in the Daily Oklahoman; (5) Smith Hempstone, whose columns appeared to have a fairly conservative slant; (6) native son, James J. Kilpatrick, nationally known for his conservative views on CBS' "60-Minutes"; (7) Victor Riesel, who also offered a conservative viewpoint, but specialized in labor issues relevant to the campaign; (8) Nick Thimmesch, who provided a more moderate approach to political editorials; and (9) staff editorials, which consistently reflected conservative thinking (they were pro-nuclear energy, pro-Connally, pro-Reagan, and in favor of a "get tough" policy internationally). Obviously, the Daily Oklahoman offered a conservative perspective, and it is interesting to examine how the preceding "persuaders" dealt with the key 1980 presidential candidates. The following analysis of editorials in the Daily Oklahoman offers both a quantitative and qualitative look at the various candidates. First, material relevant to the Democratic contenders is analyzed, and second, the Republican hopefuls are reviewed. Editorial comments which seemed to reflect general editorial opinion were selected to further illuminate the coverage on selected candidates.

II. EDITORIALS IN THE DAILY OKLAHOMAN AND THE 1980 PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

Democratic Candidates

The data analyzed in this section dealt with editorials on specific

Democratic presidential candidates--Brown, Carter, and Kennedy. While there were only three Democratic candidates versus eight Republican contenders, the total number of editorials concerning the Democratic hopefuls clearly surpassed the attention granted their Republican counterparts. Specifically, there were a total of 93 editorials on Democrats as opposed to only 79 on Republicans (see Table 1). Perhaps the reason for this discrepancy is apparent in the following analysis.

Brown

Jerry Brown's candidacy received very little analysis in the Daily Oklahoman. No editorial dealt with Brown's campaign directly, but Brown was referred to in one general editorial as lacking in character. Additionally, he was brushed aside by the comment that he was "a spaced-out governer given to African safaris with female pop singers" (Hempstone, 4/4/80, p. 10).

Carter

President Carter received a considerable amount of editorial analysis. Of the 45 editorials concerned with Carter's campaign, approximately one-third were unfavorable. The recurring issues were Carter's leadership ability and his opportunistic use of the presidency. Discussing Carter's weak leadership--particularly in terms of standing up to the Soviet Union--Smith Hempstone stated: "A man's education is, or ought to be, a continuing process. But the American people are paying a fearful price for the enlightenment of Jimmy Carter" (1/16/80, p. 12). Amplifying this discontent, Patrick J. Buchanan contrasted Carter's good intentions with his weak leadership in the following comment:

> Jimmy Carter remains a decent, well-intentioned man; but he and the McGovernites who dominate the State, Defense, and

> National Security Council are no more equipped to lead the United States in this Decisive Decade than were Chamberlain's crowd the crew to lead Britain in its death struggle with the gangsters of the Reich's Chancellory. (1/18/80, p. 8)

In light of his dealings with Congress and the Iranian situation, Nick Thimmesch offered a lone defense of Carter's leadership as he asserted that "the charge the president has not shown leadership will be tougher to prove" (12/25/79, p. 22).

The other noteworthy charge directed at Carter was his unprecedented use of his incumbency. Noting Carter's strategic use of the White House telephone in seeking campaign supporters, Rowland Evans and Robert Novak observed: "Never before have so many total strangers been telephoned by the president" (2/8/80, p. 6). A more vehement attack was made by Allan Cromley relative to Carter's use of elaborate White House parties to enhance his re-election chances. Cromley concluded his indictment of Carter's self-serving actions by stating: "Power of the incumbency was never more awesomely displayed. Every president has used it, but Jimmy is writing a new textbook" (2/17/80, p. 22). Overall, the examined data on Carter's campaign revealed that leadership and presidential opportunism were among the most crucial issues of editorial attack.

Kennedy

Edward Kennedy received the largest number of editorial analyses (48). Nearly one-half of the identified 48 editorials were critical of Kennedy. Of these editorials, Chappaquiddick was clearly the predominant theme. Additionally, the propriety of Kennedy's remarks against the former Shah of Iran was mentioned in several commentaries. In reference to Kennedy's interview with Roger Mudd (which aired in early November), Buchanan observed: "That Kennedy's responses to the

Chappaquiddick questions were pitiable is to be expected. His story is simply, not believable; and it is not altogether pleasant to watch a man forced to repeat pathetic deceptions on national television" (11/9/79, p. 10). In a later editorial, Buchanan further explored the Chappaquiddick incident as vital to Kennedy's credibility: "Because Chappiquiddick goes directly to the matter of Kennedy's credibility, integrity, and character, the national press has determined it is a legitimate issue to be investigated, explored and judged" (11/27/79, p. 10).

Assessing public sentiment of Chappaquiddick, James J. Kilpatrick concluded: "The inferences to be drawn from Chappaquiddick will not diminish. I have yet to meet a reasonably unbiased person, familiar with the undisputed facts, who believes Kennedy has told the truth about the incident" (11/26/79, p. 2). Kilpatrick's editorial went on to address the heart of the issue: "The contrasting characters of Kennedy and Carter (and for that matter, Gov. Jerry Brown) are bound to figure in the coming campaign. For all our vaunted freedoms and changing lifestyles, Americans remain a people at least publicly professing a conventional morality" (11/26/79, p. 4). Kilpartick thus pointed out that the candidates perceived credibility, particularly his character, could determine his successful candidacy. Highly critical of Kennedy's candidacy, a Daily Oklahoman staff editorial also spoke to this American ideal: "Character, not charisma; substance, not image--that's what Americans are demanding in a president for these troubled times" (1/30/80, p. 12).

It was evident in a number of editorials that Kennedy's campaign and character assessment were constant victims of the Chappiquiddick mystery. In discussing Kennedy's "chilling" mid-February reception in

New Hampshire, Evans and Novak concluded:

> Although Chappaquiddick was never mentioned during Kennedy's day, it infests his campaign and his desperate efforts to revive it in New Hampshire. His reborn liberalism, his attacks on the president and Iranian hostage politics all are eclipsed by comparisons of character. Unavoidably, such comparisons are shaped by Chappiquiddick. (2/16/80, p. 16)

Kennedy's anti-Shah remarks also drew considerable editorial fire. Buchanan viewed Kennedy's "outburst against the deposed and ailing Shah" as a "calculated gamble which has raised further questions about his judgment" (12/8/79, p. 12). Evans and Novak amplified this accusation of bad judgment: "The failure of Kennedy and his entourage to comprehend the damage of his attack on the Shah is a dangerous setback. Some politicians are asking: 'Is it possible Teddy Kennedy really is a stumblebum?'"(12/10/79, p. 14). Finally, Cromley summed up the counterproductive nature of Kennedy's comments: "Unfortunately, what we read these days and see on television sounds as if Teddy boy had driven off another bridge when he blurted out that remark about the shah, . . ." (12/16/79, p. 40). In sum, the examined data on Kennedy's campaign clearly indicated that Chappaquiddick and his statements concerning the Shah were the dominant themes of critical editorial analysis.

Republican Candidates

The data analyzed in this section dealt with editorials on specific Republican presidential candidates--Anderson, Baker, Bush, Connally, Crane, Dole, Ford, and Reagan. As previously noted, the Republican candidates simply did not capture as much editorial page space as the Democratic candidates. The best explanation that we can offer for the difference is that Reagan did not really face formidable

opposition. Among the numerous declared Republican candidates, only Anderson and Bush posed any real threat--and theirs was a rather short-lived challenge. Conversely, the Carter-Kennedy battle was initially seen as a knock-down-drag-out confrontation which drew an abundance of public attention. Nonetheless, the purpose of the forthcoming section is to analyze the eight Republican candidates relative to critical commentary in the Daily Oklahoman.

Anderson

John Anderson received some editorial analysis in the last three time frames (see Table 1). Of the 10 editorials analyzed on Anderson, most were clearly unfavorable. Discussing Anderson's switch to an anti-nuke position after "15 years of staunch support for nuclear power," Evans and Novak made the following observation:

> That is part of the pattern that moved Anderson from pathetic obscurity to darling of the national media and now into contention as leading alternative to Ronald Reagan. Although depicted by admiring news accounts as the only candidate of principle, he tells audiences (mostly on college campuses) only what they want to hear and seeks confrontation only with his enemies. That is not quite St. John. (3/14/80, p. 10)

Evans and Novak thus charged that Anderson's principles were flexible and self-serving. In concluding their assessment of the appeal of Anderson's candidacy, they stated: "A candidate who comes over as high-taxation, anti-military, anti-nuclear, and pro-abortion is understandably congenial to normal Democratic voters who see him as more liberal than Jimmy Carter and more moral than Teddy Kennedy" (3/14/80, p. 10).

An even more overt condemnation of Anderson's so-called principles was made apparent in a closing comment by Buchanan: "As Anderson has done his ideological strip-tease before a drooling press, he has peeled off every social, foreign and defense position he once held, leaving

him with only the G-string of his self-righteousness" (3/17/80, p. 8).

Baker

Howard Baker received mininal editorial analysis in the last two time frames, and no significant analysis before that time. What little commentary there was on Baker was basically indifferent to his campaign and candidacy.

Bush

George Bush received some editorial analysis, particularly in time frame #4 and #5. Commentaries here generally dealt with factual information--campaign highs and lows--most often in a favorable tone. However, Bush's association with Richard Nixon was scrutinized in one editorial. When approaching the New Hampshire primary, Evans and Novak commented that perhaps the best way to counter Bush's "newfound political magic" was to effectively portray him as an "upperclass front man for the old Nixon gang" (2/29/80, p. 8). Evans and Novak pointed out that even Howard Baker referred to Bush as "Nixon's hand-picked Republican National Chairman" (2/19/80, p. 8).

Connally

John Connally received some analysis, but the most considerable coverage was in the 5th time frame. Commentaries generally dealt with factual information and explanations as to why Connally's seemingly strong candidacy never materialized. An example of this was the following comment: "Of all the players in the presidential drama, Connally looks the most presidential and he acts the most presidential. Why is he getting nowhere in his quest for the Republican nomination?"

(Kilpatrick, 2/26/80, p. 10). Staff editorials initially appeared to be strongly in favor of Connally's candidacy.

Crane

Philip Crane's candidacy received no specific editorial analysis.

Dole

Bob Dole received minimal editorial analysis. His candidacy never seemed to be taken seriously and he was labeled by Kilpatrick as the "Bob Hope of the Campaign Trail" (11/27/79, p. 10).

Ford

Gerald Ford's near-candidacy drew several commentaries which were generally negative. Conservatives such as Buchanan, Buckley, and Kilpatrick appeared to be strongly against his candidacy and especially critical of his remarks that "Reagan could not win in November." Buchanan's comments characterized their reaction: "Ford has already missed the train" (2/7/80, p. 10).

Reagan

Ronald Reagan received a considerable amount of editorial analysis throughout the campaign--a total of 35 editorials. Other than somewhat negative commentary by Evans and Novak, Reagan received very favorable editorial coverage in the Oklahoman. Editorials on Reagan were particularly favorable in time frame #6. Reagan's age, which initially was thought to be a crucial issue, was alluded to in several editorials. Even in these editorials, Reagan was viewed in a generally positive light. For example, William Buckley's comment was somewhat typical:

"He is an accomplished orator and an amusing and likeable man, but there are signs that he is losing some of his public--almost certainly because of the question of age" (2/26/80, p. 10).

III. CONCLUSIONS

Editorial analysis in the Daily Oklahoman relative to the first six months of the 1980 presidential campaign was clearly in favor of conservative candidates. This is not necessarily an indictment of the editorial policies of the Daily Oklahoman. The editorial page obviously is designed to promulgate issue and candidate preferences (Kraus and Davis, 1978, p. 222). However, staff editorials, and even "selected" syndicated columns were overwhelmingly in favor of conservative candidates, often at the expense of moderates and liberals. Early in the campaign, Connally emerged as the "darling" of the editorial page. As his candidacy failed, another conservative, Reagan, was championed.

Perhaps the Daily Oklahoman's editorial page transcended our original definition of persuasion, that is, persuasion involving "attempts to influence that prompt choice." As previously noted, the "pool" of generally conservative commentators used by this newspaper seemed to preclude real "choice" on the part of the electorate. In generalizing beyond the specific implications of the Daily Oklahoman, the consumer of political editorials needs to be wary of newspaper editorial policies that are limited in scope. Thus, one cannot allow a daily newspaper to become an exclusive information base--particularly when obvious or not-so-obvious biases are rampant. In a democratic society, one must be aware that there are a variety of information sources and perspectives upon which to formulate one's "political reality."

In retrospect of the November 4th election, the Daily Oklahoman appeared to represent, in microcosm, a political wave haunting the likes of Anderson, Brown, Carter, and Kennedy, while courting Reagan's brand of conservatism. This investigation did not attempt to measure the reader's actual attitude change/reinforcement as a result of exposure to political editorials in the Daily Oklahoman. Nonetheless, if previous research is accurate and "newspaper editorials do have a definite impact on opinions and political reality," then the persuasive message of the Daily Oklahoman was loud and clear.

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TABLE 1

Number of Campaign-Related Editorials in the Daily Oklahoman*

	(1) Oct. 20-Nov. 19	(2) Nov. 20-Dec. 19	(3) Dec. 20-Jan. 19	(4) Jan. 20-Feb. 19	(5) Feb. 20-March 19	(6) March 20-April 19	TOTAL
General Editorials	6	0	5	6	10	4	31
Democrats							
Brown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Carter	3	9	4	7	7	15	45
Kennedy	11	14	6	12	3	2	48
Republicans							
Anderson	0	0	0	2	3	5	10
Baker	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
Bush	1	2	0	6	4	0	13
Connally	1	1	1	0	4	0	7
Crane	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dole	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Ford	0	0	0	2	7	0	9
Reagan	4	6	1	4	10	10	35
Other	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
TOTAL	27	33	18	40	49	36	203

*political cartoons appearing on the editorial page were included in this tabulation.

42A

A RESPONSE

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The authors of "The Daily Oklahoman and Persuasion in the Early 1980 Presidential Campaign" present a content analysis which is flawed in two major ways. The first of these deals with the assumption upon which the paper is based and the second deals with the methodology employed.

Assumptions

The authors clearly wish to imply that the editorial policy of the Daily Oklahoman had an influence upon the results of the 1980 presidential campaign in Oklahoma. Toward this end, they attempt to establish the persuasive effects of print media editorials by reference to the research of Robert Prisuta and a review of research done by Kraus and Davis. The latter reviews work done by James Gregg, M. C. McCombs, and J. P. Robinson. The authors seem to agree with the Kraus and Davis conclusion that these three support the notion that newspaper editorials "have effects on opinion and apparently alter and shape political reality."[1] The research of Robinson was not available to this reviewer; however, a close review of the work of Prisuta, Gregg, and McCombs posits serious questions about the application of their research in this instance.

Prisuta, for example, conducted research to compare impacts of print and electronic media. He is careful to note that his study does

not focus on the issue of newspaper influence on voting patterns. "Only limited attempts were made to ascertain cause and effect (i.e., did media exposure cause a certain behavior or did a certain behavior lead to a particular media exposure?) rather, in most cases, emphasis was placed on the relationship itself."[2] His conclusion was that media exposure affects how likely a person is to vote and/or how likely one is to be interested in the political system, but he does not make claims about influence upon voting patterns. Moreover, Prisuta makes no claims at all about editorials as such. "No attempt was made to differentiate among the various types of political messages of the mass media (news, commentary, editorials, etc.) which are suggested areas for further research."[3] In short, Prisuta does not posit the notion that newspaper editorial policy is the basis for a cause-effect relationship on voting outcome or that editorial policy has such effect.

Gregg and McCombs do deal with the issue of editorial endorsement upon voting patterns. However, their research not only fails to provide a basis for the Vartabedians' position, it almost seems to argue against them. Gregg looked at eleven papers in California over a fourteen year period, not one newspaper over a six month period.[4] Among his conclusions was that editorials have little impact on races for state and national office but have greater impact on local races and ballot measures.[5] He argues that this is true because on such local issues there are few other determinants to impact on voter decisions. That is, issues like party identification, attitudes and other information sources have less effect on local races and ballot measures and therefore local endorsements have greater effect. In McCombs' update of Gregg's research, he seems to agree. "In the simplest case, where these variables are at a minimal level (for example, a ballot measure

dealing with taxation on insurance companies) then the editorial endorsement may be the primary source of orientation."[6] What both Gregg and McCombs are saying is that editorial policy has impact in local issue elections but not much impact on state and national elections because in local elections such editorial endorsement may be a primary source of information, but in statewide races, they are not. There is nothing in the research of Prisuta, Gregg, or McCombs to suggest that the editorial policy of a single newspaper, in a brief time frame, will set a tone for an ensuing campaign or that it will impact upon voting patterns in a presidential election.

Given that lack of support, one is forced to ask if the Vartabedians' research by itself leads to such an implication. The answer is no. No effort was made to determine if those supporting or attracted to Reagan were influenced by the editorials, or even if such voters had read the editorials. The only real conclusion one can draw is that a conservative newspaper took a conservative editorial stance in an election won by a conservative candidate in a state with a history of voting conservatively.

Methodology

The content analysis conducted is superficial on several related counts. The paper establishes no criteria or standards for the labels generated or the judgments rendered. Content analysis has been defined as a "research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitive description of the manifest content of communication."[7] It assumes a set of judgmental procedures and a systematic method of sorting and labeling. In this paper, however, a thing is whatever the authors say it is and in that way the paper is neither systematic nor objective.

The editorial writers, both in-house and those nationally syndicated, for the Daily Oklahoman are all labeled conservative. There is the assertion that they represent positions on a scale of conservatism--that is, they are all conservative, some more, some less. However, there is no justification for these placements. How, for example, was it determined that Nick Timmerch is more moderate than Evans and Novak? Issues are labeled with the same lack of standards. It is asserted that a pro-nuclear energy stance is a conservative position, but it may or may not be. Some standard other than the authors' perception is needed to establish that label. Candidates are also labeled without regard to any objective standard. In this paper, President Carter and Senator Kennedy are both "liberals" without any attempt to recognize the differences in their political positions. I would suggest that Carter was and is a good deal to the right of Kennedy and that many viewed his nomination as a victory for the conservative wing of his party. In one sentence, the Vartabedians lump Anderson, Brown, Carter, and Kennedy together. While it may be true that all of these men are more liberal than Reagan, to place them together in this way demonstrates that no objective criteria has been used to systematically locate the candidates in relationship to their political positions.

In the same fashion, the authors reveal no standards for their own selection and rejection process concerning the specific editorials analyzed. Their basic notion is that "liberal" candidates were given a negative editorial treatment, but the numbers presented makes one wonder. We are told that President Carter was the subject of forty-five editorials of which one-third are said to have been unfavorable. We are then presented a content review of the unfavorable editorials. There were two questions which seem apparent. First, what constituted an unfavorable

editorial? Did an editorial need to attack some policy or personal quality, or was linkage to a liberal issue considered unfavorable? Because we do not know what objective standard was used, we do not know if the judgment rendered is valid. Second, what is the basis for non-treatment of two-thirds of the editorials dealing with Carter? If these were not unfavorable, were they neutral or favorable?

If these, the larger number of editorials, were favorable, then the premise of the whole paper is in doubt. It is not just that the analysis focuses on the smaller number of editorials and ignores the larger number; it is that we have no explanation for a rationale for the manner of selection. One is left with the observation that the authors dealt with those editorials which supported their position and rejected others without explanation.

If one changes the numbers, the same is true for the treatment of Kennedy. The authors say that nearly half of the forty-eight editorials dealing with Kennedy were critical. I assume, therefore, that over half were not. Here, the authors not only fail in the need for objective standards, they fail in the demand for a quantitative description. Even if we are not told how editorials were determined to be favorable or unfavorable, we ought to be told how many each category contained.

In the Republican section of the paper, the lack of standards and quantitative description grows worse. In no case is their material to suggest what percentage of the editorials dealing with the eight candates was favorable or unfavorable.

The descriptions given for each would suggest that all editorials dealing with Republican candidates, save Reagan and per[illegible] Connally, were negative. Still, because no specific information is given, there

is no way to know. Examples of negative comments concerning Bush include the observation that he was "Nixon's hand-picked Republican National Chairman." That may or may not be a negative comment. Of Dole, we are told that Kilpatrick referred to him as the "Bob Hope of the Campaign Trail." That could mean that he was viewed as a clever, funny, popular, and well-received person or that he was seen as a buffoon. One simply cannot take a statement out of context without regard to some criteria and use it as justification for a judgment rendered.

In the final analysis, then, this effort at content analysis fails because it is not objective, systematic, or quantitative.

Conclusion

The authors of "The Daily Oklahoman and Persuasion in the Early 1980 Presidential Campaign" do not establish that the editorial policy of the Daily Oklahoman set a tone for the campaign. They do not present a systematic content analysis supporting their major assertions. The premise of their paper remains an interesting but unanswered question.

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